Maps of Falmouth

David Farnham
The Falmouth Historical Society
May 25, 2022
Maps!

Maps are snapshots in time

• Tell the story of the land and its people
• Often contain information found nowhere else
• Illuminate other written records

Maps hold the key to unlocking the stories of our families, our homes, and our town

• Whatever your topic of interest, sooner or later your research will take you to deeds
• Maps are indispensable when following a trail through land records
Maps!

Atlases are a fabulous resource

• Often provide locations and names for homes and businesses

Next: We’re going on a guided tour of maps used by our volunteers

• Use those maps to travel back in time to 1635
Google is a good place to start

- Google is serious about maps
- Google Maps Street View enables “armchair reconnaissance” and even some time travel
- General search
Next stop is the current town plat

• Official map of the town
• Lots of information
• Lots of tools

Property Card from the Assessor's Database

Library (with aerial view as the base map)
Falmouth Town Plat (1957)

Falmouth Public Works map from the Mid-20th century
- Portrays Falmouth before expansion from farmland to suburb
- Shows lots before many were subdivided or combined

Not online; can be viewed at Falmouth Heritage Museum
Historic Topo Maps (1893-present)

US Geological Survey Topographic Maps
- Portrays Falmouth before expansion from farmland to suburb
- Shows roads and approximate locations of buildings
- 1957 topo maps pair with 1957 town plat
Historic Nautical Charts (1775-present)

US Coast & Geodetic Survey Charts &
Des Barres Chart of Falmouth Harbour

• Intended for use
  by mariners
• Detailed and accurate
depiction of coastline
• NOAA website isn’t
  intuitive

Link to C&GS charts:
https://historicalcharts.noaa.gov/
Sanborn Map (1924)

Sanborn Map Company Fire Insurance Maps
- Covers only portions of Foreside
- Very detailed
Richard’s Atlas of Portland (1914)

Portland atlas covers only the lower Foreside

• Detailed
Stuart’s Atlas of Maine (1894)

Maine atlas covers only the Foreside

• Only landmarks are shown
• Some items on this map are found nowhere else
Atlas of Cumberland County (1871)

One of the most useful set of maps

- Falmouth
- New Casco
- Falmouth Corner
- Presumpscot Falls
- West Falmouth
Another one of the most useful maps

- First detailed map showing roads and most homes
- Falmouth and Falmouth Corner

Map of Cumberland County (1857)
Surveys of Falmouth Roads (1804-28)

Town Road Survey

- 1804 at MHS Brown Library
- 1828 online at Osher Map Library
- Roads are accurate; only selected buildings are shown and locations are approximate
- Infrastructure!!!
Plan of Falmouth (1794)

Official survey of town submitted to General Court of Massachusetts

- Saccarappa and Deering were still part of Falmouth
- More infrastructure!!!
Falmouth Neck (1775)

Portland Peninsula when destroyed by the British
- Prepared by William Willis ca 1850
- Still part of Colonial Falmouth
- Shows where many prominent families lived; many of those families later moved to Falmouth
Proprietors Map (1732)

The Proprietors of Colonial Falmouth

- Formed in 1732 to resolve the chaos of land ownership after decades of war
- Re-baselined title to land in Falmouth
- Map is the companion to the three-volume Records of the Proprietors
- Map is the “Rosetta Stone” for making sense of early deeds
- Expertly imaged by OML using state-of-the-art equipment
- Some portions are illegible
Ancient Falmouth (1630-1690)

Colonial Falmouth prior to its destruction by the French

- Prepared by William Willis ca 1850
- Shows where many early English settlers lived
- Does not show areas occupied by the Aucoscisco
Accessing the Maps

All but two maps are accessible online

- Links to maps are on FHS website: https://thefhs.org/
- Select “Research” tab
- Click on “Falmouth Historical Maps”

Don’t try to download

- Open map in browser
- View in full-screen mode
- Zoom in for maximum detail
- Take a screen shot and save image
More About Maps

Maps excel at conveying information
• Humans are “wired” to absorb visually

Maps are seldom authoritative
• Likely to have more errors, more omissions, or be more outdated than textual information
• Tend to be more accurate when money is involved

Our volunteers are ready to help you solve your mysteries!
• info@thefhs.org or (207) 781-4727